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Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5961st meeting

Tuesday, 19 August 2008, 4.15 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Grauls	(Belgium)
Members:	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Vilović
	France	Mr. Lacroix
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Mantovani
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Ettalhi
	Panama	Mr. Arias
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Mr. Wolff
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

The situation in Georgia

Letter dated 19 August 2008 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2008/561)

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08-46619 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 4.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Georgia

Letter dated 19 August 2008 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2008/561)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Georgia, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Alasania (Georgia) took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in French*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in response to a letter dated 19 August 2008 from the Chargé d'affaires ad interim of the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, contained in document S/2008/561.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

It is so decided.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Edmund Mulet, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

It is so decided.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and by Mr. Edmond Mulet, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. I now give the floor to Mr. Pascoe.

Mr. Pascoe: The most important event since my last briefing on Georgia, on 11 August, was the agreement to six principles sponsored by the presidency of the European Union (EU), which led to the end of the military hostilities. While the members of the Council are fully aware of those principles, I would like to reiterate them for the record.

The first is the commitment by all parties to renounce the use of force. The second is the immediate and definitive cessation of hostilities. The third is free access to humanitarian aid. The fourth is the withdrawal of Georgian forces to their places of permanent deployment. The fifth is the withdrawal of Russian forces to their lines of deployment prior to 7 August 2008. That includes the additional provision that "pending the definition of an international mechanism, the Russian peacekeeping forces may implement additional security measures". The sixth is the convening of international discussions on lasting security and stability arrangements for Abkhazia, Georgia, and South Ossetia, Georgia.

Discussions on the implementation of those principles are continuing. The Secretary-General has been engaged in consultations with all concerned parties. In those consultations he has called for the cessation of all military acts and for unimpeded humanitarian access to all those in need in all of the affected areas. While welcoming the fact that the ceasefire plan has now been signed by both the Russian Federation and Georgia, the Secretary-General stressed the need for it to be implemented and for all forces to immediately withdraw as required. With all of his interlocutors the Secretary-General has reiterated the importance of respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia. The Secretary-General's Special Representative, Mr. Jean Arnault, who is on the ground in Georgia, is in close contact with parties there. The Secretary-General has also dispatched Mr. Johan Verbeke to Brussels as his representative. Mr. Verbeke took part in a coordination meeting with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the EU. Close cooperation between all the

relevant institutions is clearly important in the efforts to solve the present crisis.

The Permanent Council of the OSCE took an important decision today in Vienna to deploy immediately 20 additional military monitoring officers to Georgia. That will bring the total number of such officers to 28. The request of the OSCE is to eventually raise that number to 100. The deployment of additional military monitoring officers is subject to further decisions. The de facto South Ossetian authorities have stated that they would only accept Russian peacekeeping forces and that international observers would not be welcomed on their side of the ceasefire line. Yesterday, they asked the Russian Federation to establish a permanent military base in South Ossetia.

With regard to the situation on the ground, Mr. Mulet will again brief the Council on the developments in and around Abkhazia. I shall limit myself to sharing available information on South Ossetia and Georgia proper. As I mentioned before, the United Nations has a limited presence in the area and must therefore largely rely on secondary sources.

The Russian leadership announced that it would start withdrawing its troops on Monday, 18 August. Press reports make it clear that that has yet to get under way on a significant scale. As of today, the Russian troops remain in and around Gori in Georgia, although there are some reports indicating that a convoy of armoured vehicles and tanks left Gori for South Ossetia early today. Foreign Minister Lavrov indicated that the withdrawal of troops would take three to four days. Russian military authorities explained that Russia started the withdrawal of rear units and troops of the third echelon. The vanguard troops now in Georgia will be the last to withdraw. The Russian General Staff indicated that the withdrawal would intensify after 22 August. At the same time, the Russian military has stated that Georgia has not returned all of its troops to their bases.

The de facto president of South Ossetia dismissed his Government on 17 August and declared a month-long emergency to cope with the aftermath of recent hostilities. He has criticized his cabinet for the slow response to the needs of displaced and affected people. The South Ossetian de facto authorities reported over 2,100 dead as a result of the conflict. Georgia disputes those figures, while humanitarian agencies on the ground cannot independently verify that information. The investigative committee of the Russian Federation, which is conducting an investigation of events at Tskhinvali, had recovered 60 civilian bodies by 17 August. Russian peacekeepers in South Ossetia lost 74 men, according to official sources.

On the Georgian side, officials reported 215 military and 69 civilians killed during the hostilities. Seventy military personnel are missing in action. An exchange of Russian and Georgian prisoners of war took place today near the village of Igoeti, south of Gori.

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have reported serious human rights abuses. There have been reports of looting in South Ossetia, the town of Gori and other surrounding villages in Georgia. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has dispatched an officer to Georgia to provide human rights support and advice to the United Nations country team, as well as to conduct a preliminary assessment of the human rights situation there.

As a result of the recent hostilities, 158,600 people have been displaced. That figure includes 98,600 displaced within Georgia, about 30,000 displaced within South Ossetia and another 30,000 displaced in other parts of the area. The overall planning figure for IDPs remains at 128,600, including 30,000 displaced to Russia from South Ossetia, on the basis of data obtained from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The number of those in need of immediate assistance, including people fleeing from the Upper Kodori area of Abkhazia, from South Ossetia and from the town of Gori, has risen to 89,000. From the currently available data, it appears that approximately 50 per cent of the IDP population has been registered.

Today and tomorrow, UNHCR is sending two planeloads consisting of 30.4 tons of non-food items to Vladikavkaz in North Ossetia, Russia, following the acceptance by Russian authorities of an aid offer from the High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres. The High Commissioner is visiting Georgia today. He will then travel to Moscow for high-level meetings and to Vladikavkaz. He is also planning to visit South Ossetia, Georgia.

The President of the International Committee of the Red Cross visited Vladikavkaz yesterday but was unable to enter South Ossetia. Several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have

complained of difficulties in gaining access to South Ossetia, where Russia's Emergencies Ministry has been coordinating a major relief effort. United Nations agencies continue to appeal to all parties for the opening of a humanitarian corridor.

As of 18 August, a number of locations, including the town of Gori, are accessible for the first time since the conflict began. Given the opening of the humanitarian corridor allowing east-west access in Georgia, the distribution of humanitarian relief is gaining momentum beyond Gori and as far west as Poti. United Nations humanitarian agencies were in Gori for a short visit and were able to bring some essential water and hygiene supplies. The town appeared deserted, save for the presence of the elderly and persons who were too sick to move. Water and electricity lines have been reconnected. There is no cooking-gas supply. Some apartment buildings have clearly suffered damage.

On 18 August, an interagency flash appeal for Georgia was issued. Ten United Nations agencies and 15 NGOs participated in the appeal. The flash appeal was also launched today in Tbilisi by the Resident Coordinator and by the Prime Minister of Georgia. The flash appeal is requesting approximately $56 million for six months of assistance to those affected by the crisis. As of 18 August, more than $24 million in contributions has been registered on the Financial Tracking Service of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, with an additional pledge of $3 million having been made.

The Secretary-General's position on Georgia has been clearly reflected in his various public statements on this issue. Full implementation of the six principles would allow for the provision of humanitarian assistance to those affected, defuse the situation and offer hope that a political solution to the problems can be found. The United Nations stands ready to facilitate international discussions in that regard and to take part in any concrete arrangements for a settlement.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Pascoe for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Edmond Mulet, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

Mr. Mulet: Allow me to update the members of the Council on the situation that has prevailed in and around the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict zone since my last briefing, on 11 August.

In a key development, on 12 and 13 August, the Abkhaz side launched a military operation in the Upper Kodori Valley. No actual close combat took place, because the Georgian armed personnel in the Upper Kodori Valley had been withdrawn beforehand. Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili accused Russia and the Abkhaz side of expelling the entire ethnic Georgian population from the Valley. The team base of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) in the Upper Kodori Valley remains closed. The Mission is considering launching a patrol there to assess the situation.

During the previous week, the Abkhaz side HAD crossed the ceasefire line on several occasions despite warnings from UNOMIG not to do so, causing agitation among the local Georgian population. The crossings took place mainly in the areas of the Ganmukhuri and Khurcha "pockets" along the ceasefire line on the Zugdidi side. Occasionally, the Abkhaz crossed over to Georgian villages in the north of the Zugdidi sector, but they withdrew on the advice of the peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). One serious incident occurred on 17 August, when two Abkhaz personnel were killed and two others wounded as a result of the explosion of a radio-controlled landmine in the Ganmukhuri Patriot Youth Camp.

The Zugdidi town and district administrations and the police are functioning. Through the continuous presence and patrolling of UNOMIG, the local population in Zugdidi town has been reassured that, despite the tense situation, there is no direct threat to them. The people who left the town at the beginning of last week have started to return home, and at the moment it appears that almost all of the population has returned to Zugdidi. An issue of serious discontent between the administration and the CIS peacekeeping force remains the fact that the force is still occupying several buildings in Zugdidi town.

The Mission has been able to monitor major movements of CIS and Russian troops along the main road, the M27, on the Zugdidi side. It has concluded that some of those forces are concentrated along the southern edge of the zone of conflict. UNOMIG is not in a position to confirm the number of those troops. Outside the conflict zone, the Russian forces have

reportedly conducted operations to destroy military assets at the Senaki military base and at Poti harbour. No targeting or damaging of public infrastructure has been reported in those areas.

UNOMIG has continued to patrol in the Zugdidi sector. It has resumed patrolling in the Gali sector, but only along the main road for the time being.

Finally, I would like to mention an important issue that could have implications for our area of operations. As members are aware, UNOMIG counts on CIS peacekeeping forces to provide security for our military observers and our installations. However, on 14 August, the Georgian parliament unanimously voted in favour of Georgia's withdrawal from the Commonwealth of Independent States. By a unanimous vote, the parliament also adopted an appeal to the international community to replace the CIS peacekeepers with "international peace contingents". Yesterday, the Georgian Foreign Ministry advised that it had sent a note to the CIS Executive Committee notifying it of the aforementioned resolution and of Georgia's renunciation of all obligations related to its membership in the CIS as of 18 August 2008. A day earlier, the Abkhaz de facto foreign ministry had stated that it considered it necessary to maintain the presence of a considerable contingent of Russian peacekeepers on its territory as a security guarantor.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Mulet for his briefing.

I now call on the representative of Georgia.

Mr. Alasania (Georgia): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting.

In my previous addresses to the Council, we asked this body to act swiftly to stop the aggression that my country was facing. Unfortunately, the state of affairs in Georgia has not changed, despite the ceasefire agreement reached a few days ago. The Russian side continues to violate agreed ceasefire arrangements. At the moment, the entire territory of Abkhazia, Georgia, and South Ossetia, Georgia, together with the cities of Zugdidi, Senaki and Poti in western Georgia and Gori and Kaspi in eastern Georgia, are under Russian occupation.

Georgia is occupied by Russian military forces, forces that are determined to devastate my country. Their actions have crossed all imaginable boundaries of common sense. Roads, bridges, railway tracks and other Georgian communications infrastructure have become targets of the Russian armed forces. Russian forces continue their attacks on Georgian seaports, oil refineries and terminals. Russian naval forces are blocking Georgian seaports and have destroyed vessels of the Georgian coast guard.

In addition to that, Georgian came under a cyber attack from the Russian side, causing a shut-down of Georgian information sources for the rest of the world. Moreover, Russian forces have completely destroyed and looted Georgian military bases in Senaki and Gori, and now are proceeding towards the Sachkhere mountain training centre. Russia is continuously conducting reconnaissance flights in sovereign Georgian airspace.

Looting, destruction and murder have become commonplace. Russian militaries are conducting raids in various parts of Georgia and keeping the population under constant threat and in constant terror. The population is in fear that the next destroyed city will be theirs.

All of that is aimed at destroying Georgia as a sovereign independent State and is in contravention of the commitments undertaken by the Russian side to stop the violence and withdraw. Through its aggression, Russia threatens the freedom and ability of Georgia and other emerging democracies throughout Eurasia to build political, legal and judicial systems without fear of external threats or domination.

The total number of people killed in the armed conflict reached 250 on the Georgian side as of 19 August. Sixty-nine of them were civilians; 133 of those killed were Georgian Ministry of Defence personnel, including four servicemen from the reserve troops, and 13 were from the Ministry of the Interior. Over 1,469 have been injured, and 446 of those remain in hospitals; according to reports, that toll will increase. The Government of Georgia regrets the human losses in all communities of Georgia. Our deepest sympathies go to the families of the deceased victims of this brutal, provocative war.

I would like to focus attention on the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Georgia in the territories occupied by the Russian armed forces. Moscow has decisively chosen ethnic cleansing as an instrument for achieving its political aims. Ethnically based robberies, persecution and slaughter are reported from the Russian-occupied territories. As a

consequence, ethnic Georgians are forced to flee their homes and seek shelter in cities under the control of the Georgian authorities. More than 150,000 citizens of Georgia are displaced. I quote Human Rights Watch: "The remaining residents of these destroyed ethnic Georgian villages are facing desperate conditions, with no means of survival, no help, no protection, and nowhere to go".

The Moscow-backed, self-proclaimed Mr. Kokoity, has declared that the de facto South Ossetian authorities will not allow the Georgian population to return to their homes. As was reported and affirmed by Tskhinvali authorities, they have burned down the houses of ethnic Georgians to ensure that the Georgians will not have places to return to.

Russia's aggressive actions have no boundaries. Russian armed forces attacked the Borjomi Forest Park, a unique 1,000-year-old Georgian heritage site. Even further, Russians refused to grant access to firefighting aircraft and vehicles to put out the fire.

I would like to thank the countries, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations that have stepped forward and are providing much-needed help to citizens of my country. Humanitarian efforts are not as successful as they could be because United Nations agencies and other humanitarian organizations have no access to the conflict zones because of the Russian refusal to provide access to the occupied territories. We urge everyone to exercise their utmost powers to ensure that humanitarian help and relief will be provided to those in need without any impediment.

Russian troops have invaded an independent country and have settled themselves on our territory. Towns and villages are bombed; peaceful citizens are robbed, tortured and killed; and the victims are numerous. Thousands of people are left homeless. Under the aegis of the so-called unilateral peace enforcement operation, Russian troops are annexing an independent country. The transport infrastructure of the country is paralysed. After these barbaric actions from the Russian side, no arrangements in which Russia is perceived as a mediator or guarantor will be acceptable to the Georgian people.

Georgia once again adhered to the principles agreed through the European Union presidency and President Sarkozy's mediation. We are complying with the ceasefire agreement reached and fully commit ourselves to it. We demand the same actions from the other party to the conflict. The Russian Federation has to withdraw its forces to the pre-conflict locations. Along with full respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders, which cannot be questioned, the ceasefire has to be backed with a subsequent Security Council resolution. Georgia stands ready to accommodate any legitimate security concerns that the Abkhaz, Georgian and Ossetian population of Georgia might have through direct dialogue and truly international negotiations.

Having described the ravaged situation in Georgia, I am still looking forward to creating certain conditions that will only be possible after the occupation of Georgia, when it will be possible to discuss the rebuilding of severely damaged Georgian-Russian relations.

We appeal to the Council to act — and act decisively.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call now on the representative of France.

Mr. Lacroix (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting at the request of my delegation. Allow me also to thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe and Assistant Secretary-General Mulet for their briefings and the Permanent Representative of Georgia for his statement.

France has requested that this important and urgent meeting be held because we are extremely concerned by the current situation in Georgia. I would like to recall the context that led us to call for this meeting. Following 7 August, over the course of almost a week, fierce fighting occurred in the separatist enclave of South Ossetia and then, with the intervention of the Russian army, throughout Georgian territory, particularly in Abkhazia.

Historical accounts will say that it was a series of provocations and reactions, but one thing is clear: Georgia's actions were followed by a brutal and disproportionate reaction by Russia. The violence has claimed numerous victims — at least hundreds of dead — and caused tens of thousands of refugees and displaced persons to take to the roads. Whole villages have been destroyed. Instability has once again flared up on the flank of Europe, threatening peace in the

region and risking serious tensions in international relations.

From the outset, France, on behalf of the European Union, has undertaken massive efforts at the highest levels to bring an end to the hostilities. The French Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bernard Kouchner, visited Tbilisi with his Finnish counterpart, the current Chairman of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. President Sarkozy in turn visited the region, where he met President Medevedev in Moscow and President Saakashvili in Tbilisi.

The President Sarkozy's mediation on behalf of the European Union made it possible for the Russian Federation, Georgia and the two separatist entities to commit, in writing, to a six-point plan, which the European Council has also endorsed. The plan does not resolve everything, but it constitutes the essential — and the only — basis that we have to reach a lasting solution. The signatories have undertaken permanently to cease hostilities and not resort to force. They have also committed, on the Russian side, to withdraw immediately to their pre-7 August positions and, on the Georgian side, to return to their usual quarters.

It is essential that arms be put down, but that does not mean that withdrawal any less essential. We should be clear: it is the Russian forces that are primarily concerned. The Georgian army was dislocated by the deployment at a surprising speed of a Russian force with massive, excessive numbers. It was completely driven out of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. On the rest of the territory of Georgia, a number of its essential bases were taken over, occupied or partially or fully destroyed by the Russian army. I am thinking in particular of Gori, Poti, Senaki and Kaspi. Combat operations have ceased, the Georgian army has been almost entirely destroyed. Russian forces must now withdraw in keeping with the undertakings entered into. By definition, this commitment can only be fulfilled by Russia.

On 12 August, President Medvedev undertook to withdraw these forces. Since no movement was apparent, the President of the French Republic reminded him of his commitment on several occasions. On 17 August, he again contacted President Medvedev, who undertook to begin the withdrawal at mid-day on 18 August. The information from the ground and that brought to us from the Secretariat show that nothing or almost nothing has occurred. We even understand that new weapons have been introduced by Russia into Georgian territory. The President of the French Republic has met again today with Mr. Medvedev, who assured him that the withdrawal would begin by 22 August. We hope of course that this announcement will be given effect.

The Russian withdrawal is an essential component for full implementation of the six-point plan in order to achieve a lasting peace agreement and an international mechanism to guarantee that peace. France and the European Union are more determined than ever to work to achieve this goal. The European Union has expressed its commitment to working on the ground. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is beginning to get involved, even if only modestly, with the deployment of 20 additional observers.

During this difficult period, our attention should not be turned away from the humanitarian situation. I would remind all parties of their commitment to guarantee full humanitarian access on the ground. France also would like to remind the parties of their obligations stemming from the Sochi accords and subsequent agreements on the necessity to maintain order and prevent irregular forces from causing the civilian population to suffer damage. France also wishes to recall that it is a matter of urgency that refugees and displaced persons must be allowed to return promptly to their homes.

Lastly, we welcome the exchange of 20 prisoners that occurred today through the mediation by the Ambassador of France in Tbilisi. We hope that the agreement of protocol signed at that time will be extended to many further exchanges of this type.

We would like as rapidly as possible to achieve a lasting solution which respects the sovereignty, territorial integrity and the independence of Georgia. The withdrawal of forces is a necessary precondition. Therefore, we have circulated to the Council today a draft resolution that is very simple. It is necessary to respect undertakings entered into in the six-point ceasefire agreement. The agreement must be implemented in good faith, and the forces, particularly the Russian forces, must be withdrawn to their respective positions. It is essential that the Council be able to express in a united fashion how urgent this necessity is. It is also essential to our capacity to

continue our collective efforts in the future to restore peace to this region.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): This is a time of great and deep concern over the continued instability in and around Georgia. We are convinced that the Security Council cannot delay its action any longer. We do have in place a ceasefire agreement accepted by the parties and endorsed by the main international players, including the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the European Union. Now, we expect the full, immediate and visible implementation of this agreement.

The draft resolution introduced by France aims at nothing more than this, without blaming any particular side for the current apparent stalemate. Moreover, we cannot fail to reiterate our commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, which is being called into question.

Obviously, there are other dimensions of this crisis which are of equal concern to us, including the impact on other countries of the region and the worrisome humanitarian situation. Yet it is now time to focus on the most immediate goals. The adoption of the draft resolution before us would be a first essential step towards a comprehensive settlement of the current crisis.

I would like to conclude by confirming that Italy is ready and willing to contribute to the increase of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) monitors contingent as decided in Vienna earlier today. This additional effort would complement ongoing initiatives in the area of humanitarian assistance.

Mr. Wolff (United States of America): I would also like to extend my thanks to Mr. Pascoe and Mr. Mulet for their briefings, and to welcome Ambassador Alasania to the Council.

The United States remains deeply concerned by the situation in Georgia. We deplore the loss of life, civilian casualties and extensive damage to civilian facilities throughout the country.

We support the call for an emergency meeting today because of continuing Russian military operations against Georgia despite agreement by the parties, specifically Russia and Georgia, to a ceasefire.

As of today, Russia's occupying forces reportedly remain throughout Georgia, including in Poti, Senaki and Gori. These Russian forces continue to destroy civilian infrastructure, block Georgian highways and impede the functioning of a humanitarian corridor.

We continue to receive reports that international humanitarian organizations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), continue to be denied access by Russia to South Ossetia, the region hardest hit by this conflict. By denying access, Russia is preventing what UNHCR estimates to be 128,000 internally displaced persons and thousands of other civilians from receiving assistance, despite repeated appeals by humanitarian groups.

We have disturbing reports from areas of Georgia under Russian control. Russian forces have looted Georgian facilities, destroyed essential infrastructure and allowed paramilitary bands to do the same. Georgia's main rail bridge near Kaspi was blown up on 16 August. Russian naval vessels are destroying Georgian ships and disrupting civilian shipping. This situation cannot continue.

We are gravely alarmed by the humanitarian situation, particularly in those parts of Georgia under the de facto control of Russian forces and their irregulars, where international human rights groups have reported serious human rights abuses. We demand that Russian forces fulfil their responsibility to prevent such human rights violations and call for an immediate investigation into the atrocities that are alleged to have occurred behind Russian lines.

Statements by the so-called South Ossetian president Kokoity and other de facto officials regarding their intentions to displace ethnic Georgians completely from South Ossetia are reprehensible and should be condemned by the international community. Such gratuitous incitement of ethnic hatred has no place in the twenty-first century.

Finally, we express our readiness to engage in international discussions on the modalities for security and stability in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Whatever the final outcome of these discussions, one thing is clear now: South Ossetia and Abkhazia lie within Georgia's internationally recognized borders. There is no room for debate on this point.

The United Nations Security Council has adopted numerous resolutions concerning Georgia. These

resolutions are based on the premise that South Ossetia and Abkhazia remain within the borders of Georgia and that their underlying conflicts will be resolved through international negotiations. Russia itself has endorsed these resolutions. The international community is clear that South Ossetia and Abkhazia are part of Georgia, and the United States fully recognizes this reality.

We will continue to stand behind Georgia's democracy. We will continue to insist that Georgia's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity be respected.

When this armed conflict erupted, we heard from the Russian representative that his Government was acting to defend its peacekeepers and civilians in the South Ossetia region of Georgia. Yet the military actions Russia has undertaken continue to belie that claim.

Even in its early stages, Russia's military offensive and political objectives went far beyond any reasonable or credible limit consistent with its claims. Russia has expanded its operations far beyond the conflict zone into areas that have nothing to do with South Ossetia. We have seen a deepening and widening Russian offensive that includes the opening of a second front in Abkhazia and the occupation of Georgian territory.

The objectives of this offensive suggest Russian intentions to weaken and subjugate Georgia, a sovereign country with a democratically elected Government that poses no threat to Russia.

Last week, French President Sarkozy, acting on behalf of the European Union, launched a diplomatic effort to attain a ceasefire. The United States strongly supported that effort. After Russian President Medvedev agreed to the proposed terms of a ceasefire, Secretary of State Rice travelled to Tbilisi to obtain Georgia's agreement. Georgian President Saakashvili approved the ceasefire terms on the understanding that his Government's agreement would lead immediately to a cessation of hostilities and withdrawal of Russian forces to the status quo ante of 6 August. This did not happen. Despite the Georgian agreement, the Russian military offensive continued.

On 17 August, two days after the Georgian President signed the ceasefire agreement, Russian President Medvedev undertook to begin Russia's withdrawal on 18 August. This did not happen. Russian operations continued in an effort to consolidate the occupation and continue to destroy Georgia's infrastructure.

We meet today on 19 August, seven days after President Medvedev agreed with French President Sarkozy's plan, four days after Georgia's President Saakashvili signed it, three days after Russian President Medvedev signed it, two days after President Medvedev promised to begin the withdrawal, and more than 24 hours after that last promise was supposed to take effect.

Against this backdrop of Russia's continued military offensive and diplomatic delaying tactics, we support the French delegation's draft resolution calling for immediate compliance with the terms of the agreement, to which Russia, Georgia and other parties subscribed, and particularly for the immediate withdrawal of Russian forces from Georgia in accordance with that agreement.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): I thank Mr. Pascoe and Mr. Mulet for their briefings to the Council, and I welcome Ambassador Alasania.

On 11 August, in this Chamber, the United Kingdom and others welcomed the French-led efforts to secure an immediate end to the fighting in Georgia. The culmination of those efforts was the six-point agreement signed by Russia and Georgia a week ago, together with the agreed clarifications issued by President Sarkozy.

One week on, however, the Russian Federation has failed to implement its part of the agreement. Russian forces have not complied with the requirement to withdraw to their positions prior to 7 August. Russia has spoken publicly of its intention to withdraw, and we have heard statements from Moscow claiming that withdrawal has begun, but we see little evidence of this on the ground. On the contrary, Russian forces remain in their positions deep inside Georgia, way beyond the conflict zones of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

We are equally troubled by the actions of the Russian forces now occupying Georgian territory. Since 7 August, we have seen a systematic attempt to destroy Georgia's infrastructure. On the military side, naval patrol boats have been sunk at their moorings. Barracks and other military installations well beyond the conflict zone have been levelled. And Russian forces have destroyed civilian infrastructure too. I

would like to ask the Russian ambassador what justification there could possibly be for Russian forces destroying a railway bridge on the main east-west rail link and for blocking a tunnel on a major road. Why do Russian checkpoints continue to block civilian traffic on major transit routes, in breach of President Sarkozy's clarifications to the 12 August agreement? Only yesterday, the United Kingdom's defence attaché to Georgia was turned back from a Russian checkpoint in Georgia and told he required a Russian visa in order to proceed further. Do foreigners now need Russian visas to travel within Georgia?

It is hard to see how Russian actions are consistent with Russia's claimed justification for their military assault — namely the protection of its peacekeepers and civilians in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, even though most of those civilians have only recently been handed Russian passports and have not lived in Russia.

I think the facts make it clear that this is a conflict between Georgia and Russia. Russian spokesmen try to present the problem as a conflict between Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, with Russia's role one of peacekeeper. That claim was always doubtful. The last two weeks have demonstrated beyond any doubt that Russia is a party to the conflict. Indeed, Russia's letter last week, saying that they were acting under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, confirmed that they are a party to the conflict, and Russian actions since 7 August have gone way beyond those of a peacekeeper or mediator. So let us not pretend that this is anything other than a conflict between Russia and Georgia, a conflict which Russia has clearly won militarily. Russian forces in Georgia are now, in effect, an army of occupation, and they will remain so until they withdraw to the positions held prior to 7 August and force levels return to those that prevailed then.

We remain gravely concerned too by the humanitarian situation in Georgia. We are particularly disturbed by reports of killings and ethnic cleansing perpetrated by South Ossetian and Abkhaz irregulars, in areas controlled by Russian forces. It goes without saying that Russia has a legal and moral obligation to prevent such acts, but, instead, what we have seen is the eviction of virtually all ethnic Georgians from South Ossetia. We welcome the visit of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to the region. The return of refugees and internally displaced people will be an important element of any long-term settlement of the conflict in Georgia.

Russia's failure to withdraw its forces, and the actions of those forces, raise questions about Russia's objectives in Georgia and about its willingness to honour the agreement signed by President Medvedev. They also call into question Russia's commitment to some of the founding principles of the United Nations and to respect for the resolutions of the Security Council, which have consistently upheld Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The United Kingdom calls on Russia to take immediate steps to comply with the agreement it has signed and to end its military aggression in Georgia. First and foremost, that means immediate withdrawal of Russian forces to the lines held prior to the outbreak of hostilities. There can be no excuse for further delay, and for that reason we support the draft resolution that has been put forward by France.

Mr. Vilović (Croatia): Allow me first of all to join previous speakers in thanking Under-Secretary-General Pascoe and Assistant Secretary-General Mulet for their briefings.

In previous meetings and consultations, my delegation has made clear its position with regard to the ongoing conflict, so we shall limit ourselves to a few points that we find particularly important or see as new and relevant elements with regard to the situation in Georgia.

Croatia welcomes the six-principle agreement, signed by Georgia and Russia through the diplomatic efforts of the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United States, to end the hostilities and reach a political solution to the conflict. According to that agreement, all military action must cease and military forces must return to their positions held prior to the outbreak of hostilities. We call on all parties to the conflict to fully comply with the agreement.

Accordingly, we call on Russia to immediately withdraw its forces from those areas within Georgia that it entered following the outbreak of hostilities on 7 August, as specified in the aforementioned agreement. We also call on Georgia to return its forces to their usual bases, also in line with the situation that existed before 7 August. In that regard, we would also like to welcome today's decision of the Permanent

Council of the OSCE to appoint 20 additional military observers.

Croatia is extremely concerned also by the humanitarian situation on the ground. We deplore the loss of life and the civilian casualties resulting from the conflict. Croatia has undertaken measures in concert with international Organization and interested Governments, in order to provide much-needed assistance to the civilian population affected by the conflict. We call on all the parties to ensure that this assistance reaches all affected populations.

Croatia also reiterates its support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, which are recognized by international law and existing Security Council resolutions.

Finally, Croatia fully supports the draft resolution on the situation in Georgia prepared by the delegation of France as a first and necessary step towards the full implementation of the six-principle agreement. We hope that the draft resolution can be adopted expeditiously with the aim of ensuring that the parties implement the six-principle agreement in its entirety and in good faith.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): If there are no further speakers wishing to take the floor, I should like to say a few words.

At a previous meeting of the Security Council, I asked the representative of the United States a question: What, in his opinion, should the Security Council be focused on — serious political work or propaganda? At that time, unfortunately, I received no answer to that question, and today it is clear why. Unfortunately, the statements made today by the representative of the United States and others have been clear expressions of propaganda, to the detriment of the serious political work that must be done in the Security Council and the political tasks facing us today.

I believe that one can hardly fail to see that today's meeting was convened to a large extent under the influence of the North Atlantic Council foreign ministerial session just held in Brussels. I note in passing that the final statement issued at that meeting appears to be non-objective and biased and contains not a single word concerning the reasons for the conflict or about who initiated the aggression, who armed Georgia and who has consistently blocked our insistent proposals to conclude a legally binding agreement on the non-use of force. The impression has been given that, behind the convening of today's meeting, there is a wish to distract the Security Council from its task of adopting a decision endorsing the well-known Russian-French peace initiative to end the conflict and pave the way to a settlement.

Once again in this Chamber, there has been a further attempt today to turn matters on their head and to portray the aggressor as the victim. Once again, rhetoric has been bandied about accusing Russia of the most mortal sins, including some extremely wild accusations. I wish in that respect to focus on the key theme that the French delegation is now promoting for the draft resolution it has proposed for adoption by the Security Council. However, in the light of some of the remarks that have been made in the Council Chamber today, I cannot fail to say a few words first.

First, with regard to the humanitarian situation, no one is undertaking a humanitarian operation as large as that of Russia in the conflict zone. Not one country or one humanitarian organization is doing as much as Russia, not only inside South Ossetia and Tskhinvali, which was effectively wiped off the face of the Earth by the Georgian aggression, but also in some Georgian areas that we have entered, such as the city of Gori, which is in close vicinity to South Ossetia and where our military has had to deal with massive stockpiles of discarded weapons. In recent days, we have fed the civilian population there and have called on the Georgian authorities to help the people of that city, who have been abandoned to their own fate. No one is doing anywhere near as much as Russia to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe.

With respect to the international humanitarian organizations, with which we have of course sought contact, the heads of those entities have either concluded or are planning visits to Russia and the conflict zone. We therefore hope that cooperation can begin and that the international humanitarian organizations will be able to do their humanitarian work effectively in the conflict zone.

I should now like to address what may be a side issue, but one on which I wish to focus. In several statements made today, reference has been made to what President Kokoity of South Ossetia said about refugees. Our Foreign Ministry has issued a special statement on that matter which lays out the facts with

respect to international norms applying to refugees. That is undoubtedly one of the questions that will have to be settled in the process of normalizing the situation in the conflict zone.

Much has been said and many rhetorical questions have been asked on the basis of unverified information and even of disinformation. The Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom was not present when previous statements were made, but he has expressed concern about the fate of the United Kingdom's military attaché, who for some reason was in the area of conflict and was arrested. I do not know the facts of that specific situation.

As I read the statement issued today by the North Atlantic Council foreign ministerial session, I was struck by a phrase to which I would like to draw the Council's attention. It was obviously drafted by military experts and not by politicians; NATO clearly has good people working on such statements, just as we do, and they should be appreciated. I am sure that they understand each other very well in such matters. In particular, the statement reminds Russia of its obligation to maintain security and order in the areas under its control. We do not need to be reminded of that. I will cite one example to demonstrate our awareness that we bear full responsibility for security.

Some illegal activities may have occurred there; that cannot be entirely dismissed, of course, when the entire region has been destroyed as a result of the Georgian military adventure. We cannot deny that there may indeed be such circumstances, but I can state that Russian military personnel have the strictest orders to stop such illegal activity when they witness it.

Some of my colleagues are behaving as if they have not attended the five previous meetings and are now making their own interpretations of events, but I should like to recall that this is now the sixth meeting on this topic. The first was convened as Russia warned the Council that Georgia was on the verge of unleashing a military adventure. We called for that meeting on the night of 7 August; further meetings were held in the course of the conflict in an attempt to reach a settlement. That quest concluded in a meeting in the Moscow Kremlin on 12 August at which the Presidents of France and Russia read out the six-principle peace plan.

The task of the Security Council today is to support that plan and to promote progress in its implementation. Unfortunately, given the kind of propaganda we have heard today, we are merely making it harder for the Council to perform that task. We do not understand why that must be so, but returning to the core issue that the French representative touched on today, I can say the following.

The Russian side has consistently implemented its obligations. Under the Moscow six-principle agreement, by order of the President of the Russian Federation the Russian armed forces have pledged to pull back the forces and matériel provided to the peacekeeping contingents. As of today, preparations are under way to establish the logistical bases for the peacekeeping posts that, again pursuant to the Moscow agreement, are being set up as an additional security measure in the peacekeeping zone. The construction of the posts is slated to be concluded by 22 August. I stress that the pull-back of the combat units that have been attached to the peacekeeping contingents is ongoing. Rear units and military hardware are being pulled back, and the roads are being cleared for the pull-back of forward units. At the same time, in full compliance with the Moscow agreement, a security zone is being created. When the peacekeepers assume their positions on the external border of that zone, those forces that were introduced in support of the peacekeepers will return to their areas of deployment.

I should like in passing to ask the representative of the United States a question. In the course of the conflict, the United States withdrew 2,000 Georgian servicemen from Iraq. Are they going to return to Iraq? What does the future hold for them?

The withdrawal of Russian troops will be commensurate with the effectiveness of the Georgian side's implementation of its obligations under the Moscow peace plan, which stipulates first and foremost the return of Georgian troops to their places of permanent deployment: their barracks. And I would like to point out that, although Mr. Saakashvili signed the peace plan's six points and pledged to withdraw his troops, we note today that that obligation has not been fulfilled. Every day there are incidents in which our servicemen, in one part of the security zone or another, hold Georgian troops who have not yet returned to their barracks or groups of armed individuals who are present for no comprehensible reason. Such incidents seriously complicate the overall situation and hamper the process of withdrawing troops according to plan.

We appeal to all to be guided by objective criteria, not by a desire to whitewash those who initiated the aggression. We are convinced that the Council's attention should be focused on endorsing the Moscow peace plan developed by the Presidents of Russia and France. It contains six clear, consistent and logically interlinked principles for stabilizing the situation and overcoming the crisis. Singling out individual elements of the Moscow plan and interpreting them to suit the purposes of political propaganda is counterproductive, and the Russian Federation will therefore be unable to support the draft resolution submitted today by France.

The representative of France referred earlier to two of the peace plan's six principles announced by the Presidents of France and Russia. But even on those two principles everything was mixed up: the order was changed and additional suggestions were put forward. Why is this being done? During all the work we have done together with our French colleagues in recent days, was there not an understanding that the six principles of Presidents Sarkozy and Medvedev should be clearly reflected, verbatim, in a draft resolution to be adopted by the Security Council?

Incidentally, during today's telephone conversation between President Medvedev of Russia and President Sarkozy of France, to which Mr. Lacroix referred, the French head of State said not a word about any kind of new draft resolution that would bypass the 12 August agreement.

In the light of all we have said, we appeal to Council members to step up their endeavours to forge truly effective and viable decisions to resolve the situation in Georgia. The basis of such decisions should be the six principles of the Moscow peace plan.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Belgium.

I too wish to thank Mr. Pascoe and Mr. Mulet for their briefings, and would like to make the following points.

Belgium remains gravely concerned at the continued presence of Russian troops on Georgian territory despite the repeated commitments and assurances that they would be withdrawn. There is no justification for that presence, which violates the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia. Belgium reaffirms its commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders.

Belgium is also very concerned at any action that poses a threat to Georgia's vital infrastructure. Belgium calls for respect of the ceasefire and the immediate withdrawal of Russian troops from areas from which it must withdraw by the terms of the six-point agreement signed by the Georgian and Russian Presidents on the initiative of the President of the French Republic, acting in his capacity as current President of the European Union.

Belgium believes that the international community has a crucial oversight and leadership role to play. In that connection, Belgium welcomes the decision taken by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to rapidly deploy a larger number of observers. Belgium considers that the Security Council should remain seized of this matter with a view to helping to find a solution. In that regard, Belgium supports the draft resolution circulated by France today.

Finally, on the humanitarian front, the suffering of populations affected by this situation is clearly very worrisome. Belgium once again appeals for the free and unhampered access of humanitarian aid to the victims. I wish to stress that ensuring such access is an integral part of the six-point agreement.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Pascoe and Mr. Mulet for their briefings this afternoon, and to thank the representative of Georgia for being here with us.

Eight days ago, on Monday, 11 August, I made a statement here in which I briefly summarized Costa Rica's position on this matter. Today I am taking the floor again to say that, in our view, the situation in Georgia is not a European problem; nor is it a problem that involves only the great economic and military Powers. Costa Rica firmly believes that this is a crisis in which small States that are not major economic or military Powers also have a stake. We are the majority in this Organization. Costa Rica wishes once again to emphasize the need to restore the position and

observance of international law, which guarantees the security of small countries.

We share the concerns raised by the failure to comply with commitments, in particular because those commitments were agreed upon by the parties as steps necessary to normalize the situation in Georgia. We welcome humanitarian action from any quarter, because it eases the situation of a civilian population that has been the victim of politically motivated hostilities.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of Georgia has asked to make a further statement, and I call on him now.

Mr. Alasania (Georgia): I have a very simple question, but before posing that question I want to say that the representative of the Russian Federation referred to the massive humanitarian intervention, of a kind that had not been seen before, which they are performing in Georgia. I just want to assure Mr. Churkin that the face of the Russian humanitarian efforts is well shown by the facts on the ground, by the destruction and the killings, and that it has been well reported by international observers, human rights observers and the international media, so I will not elaborate more on that.

The simple question is this. I could not really get a sense, regarding the very important issue on which we are gathered here today, whether the Russian Federation is intending to comply with the agreement reached by the French presidency of the European Union, to ceasefire and to end the occupation of the sovereign State of Georgia. This is a very simple question, but I really felt deliberate ambiguity in the answers provided by the Russian Federation's Permanent Representative. And by refusing to support the French-sponsored draft resolution, does that in effect mean that they are refusing to ceasefire in Georgia?

The President (*spoke in French*): I call on the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I shall begin with the second question posed by the Permanent Representative of Georgia. Where is the ambiguity? I said very definitely that we are complying with and intend to implement the six principles that were worked out by the President of France and the President of Russia in the Kremlin on 12 August. In fact, I think that we and the whole international community need the support of the Security Council through an appropriate resolution supporting the six principles. For some reason, however, the Security Council does not want to do that and is being distracted by propagandistic ventures. Everything is very clear. The position of the Russian Federation is crystal clear. Unfortunately, some members of the Security Council are taking a position that is no secret to anyone. It is misleading and not constructive.

With regard to Mr. Alasania's first question, regarding the tragedy that the Georgian people are currently experiencing, he can thank Mr. Saakashvili personally and those who pushed him into the military adventure in South Ossetia.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.